

# THE VISION AND MISSION

**B**ased on what we learned from our constituents and the feedback we received from the field, we challenged ourselves to look critically at our existing vision and mission and make sure they both still represented the value proposition of this Office. We also felt compelled to create – beyond just mission and vision statements – value statements about our work in the form of a cultural equity and inclusion statement and design principles. The following words in each of these statements reflect our promise to you: the artists, arts organizations, teaching artists, and people of Connecticut. Out of all of the work we have done in the process of building this plan, these statements are the most important to us, and they are a direct result of what we heard at the charrettes and from analyzing the data. It’s worth noting that these statements come from the Office of the Arts team; they were crafted word-by-word by our staff and will serve as our guideposts to making decisions about how to best serve our constituents.



# VISION:

Inspire. Empower. Educate. Transform. The arts are a human right. The Connecticut Office of the Arts envisions a world where the arts, in all forms, are embedded in everyday life.

# MISSION:

The Connecticut Office of the Arts animates a culture of creativity across Connecticut by supporting arts making and arts participation for all people.

# EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESS STATEMENT:

Equity, inclusion and access involving all populations are critical to the vitality of our neighborhoods, towns, and cities. We acknowledge that there is much work to do in this area. We are committed to supporting and fully engaging diverse members of our communities in arts policy, practice, and decision making. Continually changing demographics invite opportunity for responsible and responsive social change by attracting new perspectives that connect minds to a vision and hands to a purpose through the arts.

The Connecticut Office of the Arts will insist upon using the lenses of relevance, equity, access, diversity, and inclusion to guide programmatic and investment decisions within a framework of artistic excellence.\* Here are our definitions of what that means to us:

**RELEVANCE:** Meaningful or purposeful connection to one's aspirations, interests, or experiences in relation to current society or culture.

We commit to a culture that supports curiosity, action and awareness in, about, and through the arts.

**EQUITY:** Policy and practice that is fair and just. Our processes and systems are designed to insure that we distribute resources without bias.

We commit to a level playing field for constituents to access the resources in our control and the systems we can influence.

*\*We acknowledge that artistic excellence and merit are very hard to define, so in lieu of having a static definition below, we are leaning on resources from the field to guide our interpretation of what artistic excellence means. Here are two of the articles we go back to when grappling with what artistic excellence means: "Divining 'Artistic Excellence'" (<http://www.artsjournal.com/wetheaudience/2014/05/deviningartisticexcellence.html>) and the NEA's Art Works grant review guidelines (<https://www.arts.gov/grantsorganizations/artworks/applicationreview>).*

**ACCESS:**

We will create pathways that invite participation and communication and that provide opportunities for constituents from all populations.

We commit to cultivating channels for engagement on all levels for all people.

**DIVERSITY:**

A mosaic of individuals offering unique perspectives and experiences influenced by their ethnic, cultural, social, economic and ability backgrounds. As Malcolm Forbes says, “Diversity: the art of thinking independently together.”

We commit to enhancing creativity through diversity.

**INCLUSION:**

Active participation by constituents who represent and reflect the communities we are all a part of.

We commit to building a community that is respectful and responsive to the diverse talents, skills and abilities of all people.



# DESIGN PRINCIPLES:

Borrowed from a user-experience or design construct, design principles are the guideposts for programmatic decision-making. The Office of the Arts’ design principles should be timeless frameworks that serve to “gut check” the validity of any program the organization operates or investment it makes.

These guiding principles “define and communicate the key characteristics of the [organization] to a wide variety of stakeholders including clients, colleagues, and team members. Design principles articulate the fundamental goals that all decisions can be measured against and thereby keep the pieces of a project moving toward an integrated whole.”<sup>4</sup>

Our design principles are:

- The Connecticut Office of the Arts will insist upon using the lenses of equity, relevance, access, diversity, and inclusion to guide all programmatic and investment decisions within a framework of artistic excellence.
- The Connecticut Office of the Arts will keep a state-level focus and support a statewide ecosystem that fosters and promotes artistic and cultural health and vibrancy.
- The Connecticut Office of the Arts will celebrate artistic excellence and innovation across a broad spectrum of artistic disciplines and elevate the profile of arts organizations and artists across the state.

